

PRE-ASSESSMENT WILDERNESS CONSIDERATION

Completion of a Wilderness Suitability Assessment at the National Area is required by NPS policy. Section 6.2.1 of NPS' *Management Policies 2001* indicates that this wilderness suitability assessment was to have been completed by December 31, 2001. Due to resource limitations and other commitments, a wilderness suitability assessment has not yet been completed for the National Area.

In order to guide management's future assessment of wilderness suitability, an automated analysis of "no-vehicle-use areas" was performed. Using the data collected on roads and trails included in the proposal, as well as existing data on known oil and gas roads, the following map has been produced showing areas where no vehicles are used either by the public or private operators of oil and gas wells.




The map displays "areas" and "corridors." Vehicular use occurs along corridors, i.e., on roads or trails. Private vehicle usage (as on oil and gas roads) does and will take place on roads that are not open to the public. For the analysis, a 0.1-mile buffer was assigned on each side of roads and trails where vehicles would be used in the preferred alternative. Running the program according to selected criteria, areas of no-vehicle-use appeared having a minimum of 1000 acres of contiguous area. Three size categories of no-vehicle-use areas are shown on the map on the following page.

It should be emphasized that the "no-vehicle-use areas" on the map were generated based on known public and private vehicular use of National Area roads and trails. Nevertheless, the "no-vehicle-use areas" in the revised map are not necessarily roadless. Additional roads and other man-made features may exist in these areas that are not presently included in NPS data layers. Additional study of these no-vehicle-use areas is necessary to determine their suitability for designation as wilderness.



NPS will endeavor to have funding in place by October 1, 2006 to initiate a wilderness suitability analysis for the National Area. Thereafter, the *General Management Plan* will be amended if necessary to reflect the outcome of the wilderness suitability assessment, as well as the subsequent wilderness study (if any). In the meantime, the preferred alternative does not envision any construction activity or any other alteration of the landscape that would prevent an area that otherwise qualifies as wilderness from being so designated in the future. The only potential conflict with wilderness comes from the siting of certain bike trails. Should it later be determined that an area that otherwise qualifies as wilderness contains a bicycle trail, that trail can be rerouted and an alternative bicycling opportunity provided. It is not the intention of this *General management Plan* to foreclose or limit any future wilderness designation via the Preferred Alternative.

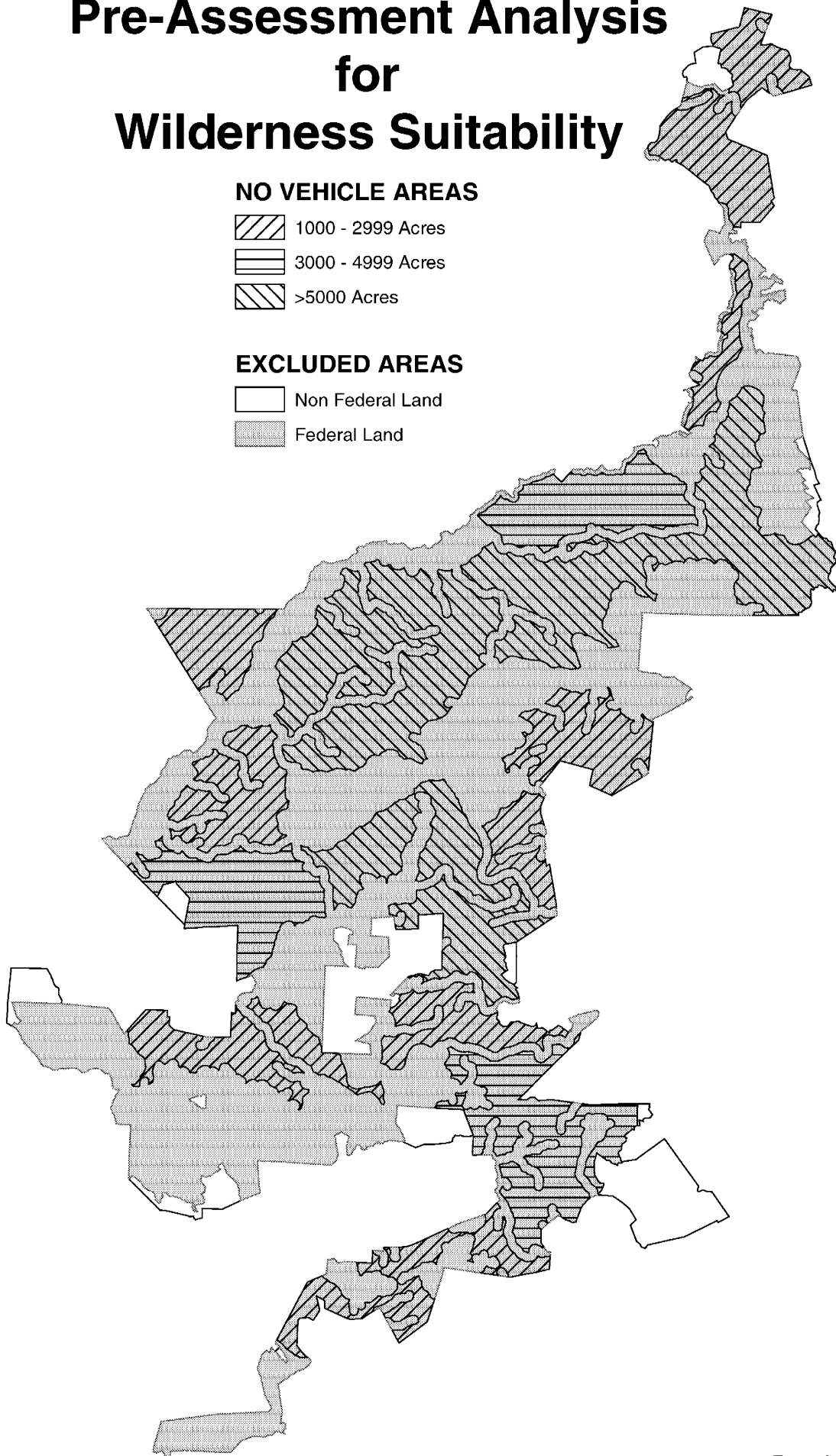
Pre-Assessment Analysis for Wilderness Suitability

NO VEHICLE AREAS

-  1000 - 2999 Acres
-  3000 - 4999 Acres
-  >5000 Acres

EXCLUDED AREAS

-  Non Federal Land
-  Federal Land



Rev. June 24, 2004